

Upon Her Their Lives Depend:
An Analysis of Posters
Recruiting Women Munitions Workers
During World War I

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes posters created by the British government to recruit women to work in munitions plants during World War I. Focusing on the images and ideas represented in these posters, it reveals that the posters were skillfully crafted to persuade women that they ought to work in jobs that were previously considered "men's jobs." Women appeared as powerful, strong figures in the posters. Additionally, they appealed to women's sense of patriotic duty and conveyed the idea that women could play a central role in fighting the enemy through this war work. These images were apparently effective recruiting tools as thousands of women went to work in the crucial munitions industries. This is significant because it is the first time in history that the British government supported the entry of women into the workforce.

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Introduction

By 1915, combat in the Great War escalated throughout the battlefields of Europe. With trench warfare, Britain faced a crisis: there was a shell shortage on the Western Front. There was not only a shell shortage that faced the British government, but also a shortage of workers in wartime industries.¹ This solution came in the form of the Ministry of Munitions formed in 1915 to oversee the production of wartime materials. The industries that fell under the category of munitions work include the industries that "produced the metals, chemicals, weapons, ammunition, textiles, food, and other equipment required by the armed forces."² The demand for more munitions on the war front forced the British government to take decisive action on the home front.

On July 16, 1915, a most unusual spectacle occurred when 30,000 women gathered to march down the streets of London. Suffragettes Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst organized the Women's Right to Serve March. Lloyd George, the new minister of munitions, had paired up with the outspoken Pankhursts to plan an event that would mobilize women behind a single cause. These women were not petitioning the government for equal rights or the vote, rather they came out to support the government's need to recruit women for work in the munitions factories. With the majority of able-bodied workers enlisted in the service, the government had little choice but to recruit women for wartime work. In his persuasive appeal to the marching women, Lloyd George stated:

¹ Diana Condell and Jean Liddiard, *Working for Victory? Images of women in the First World War, 1914-1918* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 73.

² Angela Woollacott, *Upon Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 22.

The women of this country can help, and help enormously. I believe they can help us through to victory. Without them victory will tarry, and victory which tarries means victory whose footprints are the footprints of blood. We want to shorten the war because it means life, and with life it means curtailing in many cases the burden of sorrow which the war brings. That is the great function of women in life, and I believe they are discharging that in coming forward at the present moment and saying, 'The brave men fighting for us in the trenches are in peril because they have not sufficient war material, and we can help you.'³

The march was certainly a resounding success, gathering one of the largest assemblies of women. The march encouraged women to sign up for service in the war, by seeking work in munitions factories.

The Women's Right to Serve March was the first of a series of maneuvers by the British government to recruit women for munitions production. After the overwhelming success of the march, the British Parliamentary Recruiting Committee began producing posters to mobilize women for war work. The poster portrayed women as able bodied, capable workers engaged in heavy labor and working with complex machinery. The images in the posters played upon patriotism, encouraging women to work because it was their duty. This positive and compelling representation of women showed that they were no longer dainty creatures in need of protection, but they could be pivotal players in Britain's war effort. The posters used in the campaign work created an alternate social role for women and raised the status of women in Britain.

To understand this development, this thesis will explore the history of the poster, outline the status of women workers prior to World War One, and then analyze three key recruitment posters. Through this discussion, the tactics and strategies used in posters will reveal how the women of Britain began adopting a new and alternate social role.

³ "How We Marched," *The London Times* (19 July 1915): 15.

History of Women and Employment in Britain

In the nineteenth century, women's social status prohibited them from becoming full participants in the social framework. The Victorian woman was the ultimate embodiment of all the virtues belonging to the ideal woman. While the Victorian women as the ideal female image, the reality was far different, especially for working women. The place of working women in the late nineteenth century can be understood through an examination of separate spheres ideology, protective legislation, and women as a presence in the workforce in the years leading up to World War One.

In the pre-war era, gender was a complex construction that referred to the relationship between the sexes and their positions in society. Gender was a concept thought of only in biological terms and the separate spheres ideology played upon this notion. To be a man meant to embody certain characteristics, such as being "brave, strong, and independent."⁴ On the other hand, women occupied the private sphere. This realm permitted women to become homemakers and mothers. Essentially, due to their biological traits women were equipped to do little more beyond bearing children and fulfilling their roles as mothers and caregivers.

The concept of separate sphere ideology dictated that each of the sexes belongs to the public or the private sphere. The realm of the woman was the private sphere where they hid in their lavish homes. Women fulfilled their roles as mother and nurturer in the domestic realm. The Victorian image of womanhood dictated that this sex carry out their role as a caregiver and nurturer. Essentially, they were to be dainty, fragile creatures in

⁴ Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 15.

need of protection. The concept of the Victorian woman and all the trappings that came along with it largely shaped the role of women in society at the time. This was a two-fold concept evidenced through the construction of gender and the notion of separate spheres ideology. These two perceptions shaped the role of women as they began to enter the public sphere.

The cult of domesticity certainly shaped attitudes towards women; however, this did not always hold true in reality. Rather, the presence of women in the public sphere began to increase steadily. Urban women had little choice but to enter into the factories to provide for themselves and their family financially. Whether a woman made a conscious choice to enter the public sphere, or did so out of necessity, the fact remained that the separate sphere ideology was eroding.

The term women's work was in and of itself a contradiction. During a strike in 1880, a union worker summed up the negative perceptions surrounding working women when he declared that:

It was the duty of men to earn the living for the family, and it would not do to let women work on the looms to the exclusion of men, or they would place men in an inferior position, and a man would cease to live in anything like comfort, so far as his conscience was concerned, if he saw his wife or daughters were the real bread winners of the family.⁵

Clearly, women in the workforce came into direct conflict with the dogma of Victorian womanhood and the cult of domesticity. On the other hand, the man attained the privilege of belonging to the public realm. Men dominated the public realm where they sought employment whether as factory workers or business professionals.

⁵Ibid., 128.

Working women certainly created a storm of controversy regarding their employment and their role in the home. One of the most persistent arguments against working women was that their presence in the workplace was that it was sure to lead to the demise of the home.⁶ After all, women cannot work in a factory and maintain a pristine household simultaneously. The popular sentiment surrounding working women and the deterioration of the home prevailed as Sonya Rose notes:

The factory system has not done very much for the elevation for women and in many respects has unfitted them for domestic life. We do not object as much to the spirit of independence and self-reliance it has given them; but that it has tended to corrupt and brutalize their manners and characters. It is seldom taken into account how much the children of the laboring classes suffer from the fact that the mother has lost the bloom of femininity, and if often as hard, as harsh, and as masculine as the father.⁷

It is clear that women in the workplace created a negative situation because they were sure to shirk their domestic duties. Society felt that fulfilling household duties was the number one priority for women and seeking outside employment was unacceptable.

The presence of women in the factories and other modes of employment was an easy target when moral crusaders sought to rectify social ills. Lower class women were blamed for numerous social problems including sexual promiscuity and family desertion on the parts of mothers. Seeking employment outside the home was also likely to have a negative impact on a woman's family. Moreover, other observers claimed that women working in certain "dangerous trades" experienced health problems experienced by these workers such as hysteria, convulsions, vision problems, anemia, and even paralysis. Clearly, the presence of women in the workforce violated every fiber of the appropriate social role for women.

⁶ Ibid, 135.

⁷Ibid., 137.

The negative implications of working women not only included a harmful effect of the family, but also the link between infant mortality and working women. Social reformers were more concerned with the ability of a woman to bear children than they were with the actual physical health of the woman, "debates about legislation passed in the 1890s restricting all women from working in dangerous trades focused on the effects on the babies of pregnant women who did this work."⁸ Women who worked jeopardized their ability to bear children, and this gave reformers all the fuel they needed to restrict women from working. The observation that dominated this debate was that working women were "liable to misplacement of the womb, and to rupture, and also among the married women, I find they are liable to miscarriages, as they frequently go on working when they are in the family way."⁹ The strong link developed between the health of a fetus and the employment status of the woman was one of the most persistent arguments used to restrict the ability of women to work.

The presence of women in factories and the link between working women and social ills led to a series of radical measures designed to protect the fragility of women and secure the livelihood of their children. Protective legislation passed by Parliament sought to address the problems supposedly caused by these working women. Between 1870-1914 Parliament passed a set of measures aimed at protecting women in the workforce. These measures limited the number of hours a woman could work. As one medical official who supported the nine-hour day said: if "married women were kept at home to attend their houses; nine tenths of the evils in the factory district would be

⁸ Laura L. Frader, and Sonya O. Rose, *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 209.

⁹ Carolyn Malone, *Gendered Discourses and the Making of Protective Labor Legislation in England* (London: Journal of British Studies), 177.

removed."¹⁰ One of the major components of protective legislation was restricting women from gaining employment in "dangerous trades." These are the jobs believed to place the health of a woman in the greatest danger. Some of these jobs included anything having to do with lead, pottery work, and match production. The notion of dangerous trades at the time consisted of the following rhetoric

Most commonly, the word dangerous was applied to work considered unsuitable for women. Hereafter, translating the words, unbecoming, indecent, or unfit, to unhealthy, dangerous, or hazardous was a powerful strategy for those who wanted to limit women's working opportunities. Much of the jobs considered too harmful was factory work.¹¹

The concept of dangerous work was indeed broad and greatly limited the ability of women to seek employment in a wide variety of industries.

At the heart of protective legislation were the goals of caring for the "weaker sex" and safeguarding the livelihood of their children. Legislators felt that by enacting measures that limited the presence of women in the working force they were preserving the sanctity of the family and the protecting the well-being of children. The goals of protective legislation were to alleviate the social ills that moralist crusaders linked with working class women.

Additionally, it further contributed to the notion that only certain occupations were suitable for women. These positions include working as a servant, doing weaving and cloth work in the home, and employment in textile factories. Nowhere among the acceptable positions for women are jobs in munitions factories producing mass weapons of destruction included. Men on the other hand, could and did work in dangerous trades.

¹⁰Malone, *Gendered Discourses*, 172.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

They worked in trades that produced TNT and involved heavy machinery. These were the kinds of jobs considered men's work.

The prevailing notion was that if women could only clock in a nine-hour workday they would have to spend the rest of their time at home fulfilling their domestic duties. The result of protective legislation is that it left women with little means to provide for their families. Women received less pay than men did; they received jobs that conformed to their natural duties as a caregiver with men supervising them.¹² However, these all had the effect of limiting the ability of women to secure their financial livelihood of their families because often their husbands were unreliable when it came to bringing home the bacon. Under this guise of protection, women were restricted from entering the workforce, and often their families suffered greatly when women struggled to earn a steady income.

¹² Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, 16.

The Poster and Its History

By the end of the nineteenth century, the poster was a permanent fixture in the world of advertising. The era of mass advertising began in the previous century when consumerism came to dominate British culture. The poster was effective because in selling goods because it was one of the earliest and easiest means of mass communication. Prior to the days of television and the internet, reaching a mass audience was difficult. However, the poster was effective at overcoming obstacles such as reaching a scattered audience. Posters spread a message across a broad spectrum because they were easy to produce in massive quantities. This was also an effective medium of mass communication because it incorporated both visual and written elements. Therefore, even an individual who was plagued with illiteracy could understand the basic gist of the poster. As Joseph Darracott noted, about the poster, it was a, "valuable means of commercial promotion. By the time the First World War broke out, posters were as well established as press advertising; it would have been folly for governments to have neglected such a successful medium."¹³ By the nineteenth century's conclusion, the poster served any number of purposes ranging from persuading consumers to buy a certain brand of toothpaste to encouraging people to attend a mass political gathering.

The poster became an effective political tool because it could be used to sell an idea. A poster cannot only function to encourage people to behave in a specified manner; it can encourage people to adopt a particular belief. By combining both visual and textual elements, the poster could effectively encourage a person to vote for a certain political candidate or to join a labor union. The poster appealed as a tool of persuasion

¹³ Ibid.

because it became the embodiment of a specific idea.¹⁴ The ability to use the poster to sell a concept caught on in the political realm by the time World War I began.

At the start of World War I, the British government enacted a series of measures aimed at mobilizing soldiers. To accomplish the goals of recruitment and mobilization the government formed the appropriately titled Parliamentary Recruitment Committee in 1914.¹⁵ This committee incorporated people from the political factions in Parliament. One of the main strategies they employed to recruit men into the armed forces was to use the poster. The PRC initiated the entrance of the poster onto the landscape of World War One.¹⁶ Posters featured a commanding image of Lord Kitchener stared at onlookers asking why they were not in the armed forces. The poster aided in recruiting an army large enough to continue the struggle in a war experiencing massive casualties. Over this period, the PRC played an active role in the production of posters, "The PRC gave commissions for more than a hundred posters, of which two and a half million copies were distributed throughout the British Isles."¹⁷ The poster quickly became a widely used medium in the war, not only in Britain, but in other countries as well.

As the war progressed, the purpose of the poster was not only to convince men to join the army; rather they served a variety of functions aimed at a mass mobilization of civilians and soldiers. The poster became a tool used by the government for several purposes,

they were used to call for recruits, to request war loans, to make national policies acceptable, to spur industrial effort, to channel emotions such as courage or hate,

¹⁴ Martin K. Hardie and Joseph Sabin, *War posters issued by belligerent and neutral nations 1914-1918* (London: A. & C. Black, 1920), 8.

¹⁵ Joseph Darracott, *The First World War in Posters* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1974), vii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

to urge conservation of resources, and inform the public of food and fuel substitutes; posters were part of a larger campaign.¹⁸

The poster was a key component used to enhance a message and promote a specific pattern of behavior. A large number of posters were aimed at British women over the course of the war trying to persuade them to engage in a variety of actions. These include buying war bonds, rationing food, and most significantly, for this paper they sought to attract women to the munitions plants.¹⁹

¹⁸Darracott, *First World War in Posters*, vii.

¹⁹Ibid.

Poster Analysis

The posters explored in this analysis come from the Elizabeth Ball Collection at Ball State University. I have chosen three posters for analysis: "Learn To Make Munitions," "Every Rivet Brings Us Nearer To Victory," and "On Her Their Lives Depend." These posters are among some of the most famous ones used to recruit women for munitions work. The posters are all unified in that they stress the importance of women in the workforce, as opposed to one relegating women to the private sphere. The posters presented an ideological shift that diverged from the pre-war discussion of women's work. The women who dared to enter the factories during world war one became powerful symbols of modern women. The three posters used in this analysis all played a pivotal role in redefining the role of women during the war and representing women in a different way. Posters were a valuable and inexpensive means to encourage women to do their bit. Just several years ago, women were not able to work in any sort of munitions factories, now this is just what the government needed them to do.

Methodology

Before delving into the specific analysis of the posters, it is necessary to explore the components of the posters analyzed. In particular, I focus upon the placement and choice of text and of visual images, the presentation of a coherent message, the choice of audience, and the use of an emotional appeal.²⁰ Each of these factors played a role into creating the overall tone and served the posters' goal of mobilizing women for munitions work.

²⁰ Leonard Richmond, *The Technique of the Poster* (London: Pitman and Sons, 1933): 4.

First, I analyze the visual aspects of the poster examining the illustrations, the placement of prominent figures in relation to one another, and of course the use of color in the images. The scene printed upon the posters must draw the eye of the audience so that the audience would have no choice but to look at the poster. The use of bold images and bright colors also makes the posters more visually appealing and more likely to engage the audience. Posters lacking a strong visual element are simply unappealing and boring to look at, rendering their overall message ineffective and ignored.

Not only are the visual elements significant, but so are the textual aspects. I consider not only the actual words on the poster but also their positioning. Lengthy text makes a poster undesirable to read, thus rendering it ineffective. Rather a simple, concise phrase is more effective at presenting a message. Presenting too many words on the poster makes it visually unappealing and all the less likely that the audience will pay attention. Therefore, the text should strategically occupy a place on the poster and present a simple statement. Textual representations are a basic component of a poster, it is noted, and "almost no posters are without text, so that typography is a constant factor in poster design."²¹ It is clear that a poster is not complete without a textual representation used to support the visual images.

Additionally, I look at the way in which the poster's creator tried to present a coherent message. This factor explores the overall ability of the poster to express a simple theme. All of the elements in the poster must support and exemplify the single coherent goal of this particular tool of persuasion. Therefore, the first aspect examined in the three posters at hand in the analysis focuses on the coherency and succinctness of the overall theme in the poster. Also incorporated into this concept is the general idea of the

²¹ Darracott, *First World War in Posters*, ix.

poster. The poster must present a single idea focused upon the goal of persuading women to join the workforce.

I will also be analyzing the ways in which the posters sought to appeal to their target audience of women, or more specifically working class women. These women need the money and are more likely to take advantage of an opportunity to work in a wartime industry.

One of the most effective persuasive strategies has always been the appeal to emotion over intellect. As Charles Larson said, persuasion "includes appeals to the passions or the will. Persuasion is aimed at our emotional hot buttons."²² This appeal to emotions, also referred to as pathos, is significant because it is what instills the audience with urgency. Emotional appeals in posters make the audience feel as though they have no choice but to follow the designs of the poster, or their personal well-being is at risk. The use of an emotional appeal permits the poster to "make every individual feel that he was being appealed to personally and to make each one feel guilty."²³ I will examine specific emotions that the posters sought to elicit in their female audience, including a sense of urgency, personal duty, and guilt in its onlookers. The fulfillment of these functions makes it more likely that the poster will succeed in its aims and the desired result will come to fruition. The use of an emotional appeal demonstrates the power of appeals to the heart as opposed to those of the head.

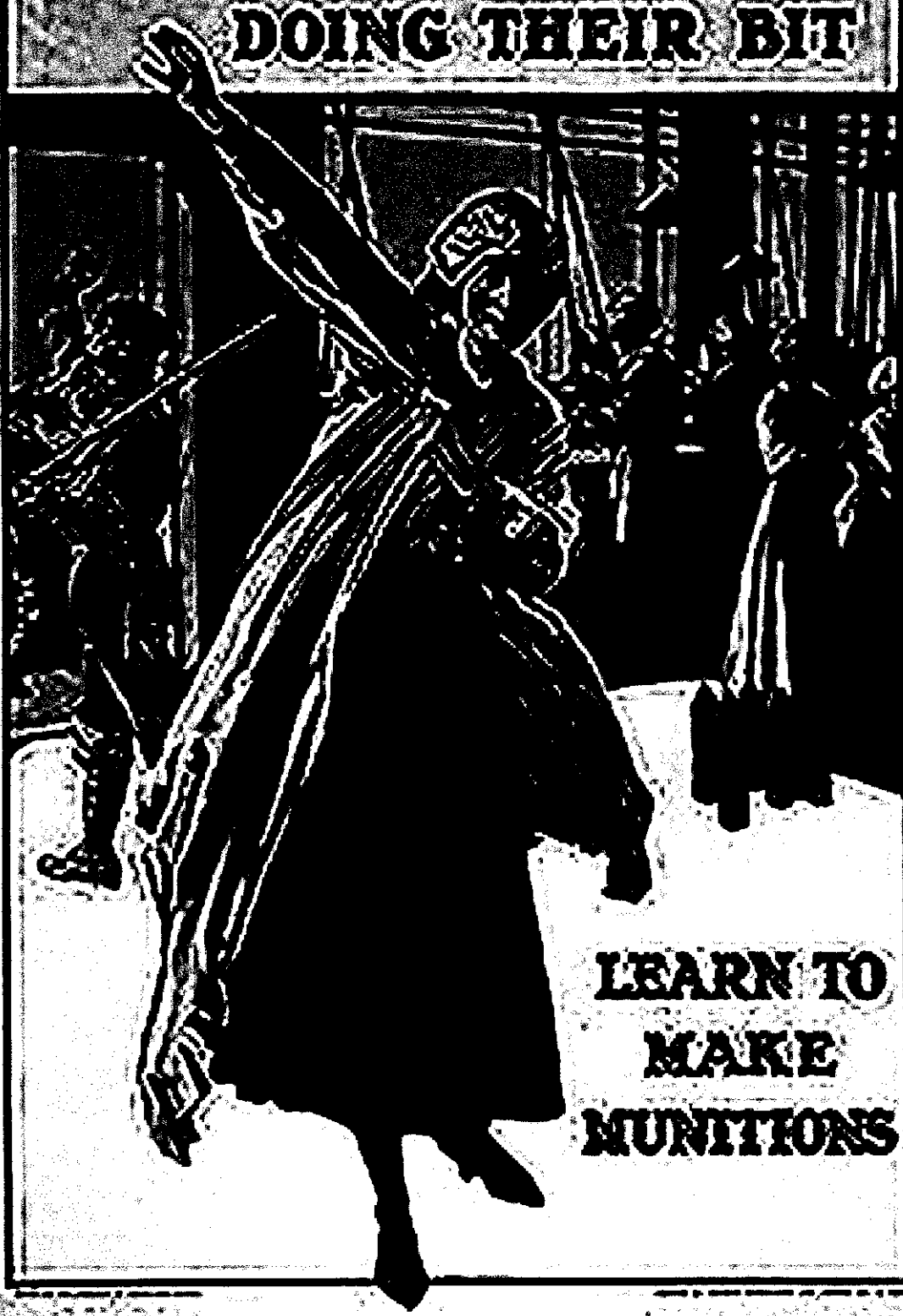
Learn To Make Munitions

The first poster in the analysis is entitled, "Learn To Make Munitions." It is one of the most recognizable posters used in the recruiting efforts aimed at women. The

²² Charles Larson, *Persuasion: Reception and Responsibility* (New York: Wadsworth Publishing, 2001), 54.

²³ Condell, *Working for Victory?*, 191.

**THESE WOMEN ARE
DOING THEIR BIT**



**LEARN TO
MAKE
MUNITIONS**

poster features the image of a woman heading out to work in the factories. In the background is a soldier leaving to go to war. The background also includes images of women at work in the factories. The image of the man in the poster stresses the idea that the women in the factories are part of a larger war effort. Women are taking up factory work because they must in order to support soldiers such as this leaving for war. The presence of the soldier in the war makes the women appear as a factory worker and a home front soldier.

A second significant component of the poster's background appears on the right hand side behind the woman headed out the door for work. This is the image of women clearly working in a factory. The women and the factory mechanisms are in shades of beige and yellow, so as not to draw away from the powerful woman in the front. This inclusion of other women in the factory effort notes that women are working in large numbers. It is not just one woman who is making a significant contribution to the war effort but also women as a whole.

The commanding phrase of the poster is "learn to make munitions." This is a clear command to the women who read the text. It is telling women, plainly and simply, what they need to be doing. The phrase supports the notion that women have a specific course of action to follow. They must learn to make munitions in order to support the war effort. This phrase is paired with the statement that "these women are doing their bit." Whereas the first phrase is a personal appeal, the second appeals to the group as a whole. It places the audience member squarely in the scene because they too should be apart of the women who are doing their duty.

The poster's choice of words is rather simple and easy to understand language. The emphasis of the word "learn" provides a direct action for the women to follow. It does not say that women absolutely must learn to make munitions; it merely says they should learn. The other unique choice of language in the poster is the use of the word "bit." Rather than saying that these women are doing their duty, fulfilling their role, or doing their part the poster uses the word bit. The use of this word appears to be significant because it is a word representative of factory language. The word bit has several meanings. In this case, the word could be referring to the larger place of a single woman in the war effort. The other meaning of the word bit is of a pointed and threaded tool for drilling. It is this second meaning of the word that is more interesting because it is language reminiscent of what takes place in a factory. The choice of this word is unique because it places the role of a single factory worker in the larger context of the war effort and it is indicative of the tools and work done in the factory.

The text appears on the poster in such a way that it supports the visual images. The first phrase "These women are doing their bit" appears across the top of the poster. It occupies two lines of text and appears above the visual images. The second phrase of the poster is, "Learn to make munitions," is at the bottom right corner of the poster. Both phrases are written in text large enough to read from a distance, yet not so large that it overpowers the poster. The words appear on the poster in bold black type. This has the effect of drawing a person to the poster by the commanding presence of the words on the page. The black of the text stands out even more because it is across a lighter beige background. The strategic placing of the text in two different spots forces the viewer to look at the entire poster. The first line of text appears across the poster from left to right.

Appearing below the final right hand side of this text is where the second line of text occurs. To look at both lines of text the viewer has no choice but to look at the larger images presented on the page. The text in this poster occurs in such a way that it draws the viewer into the entire landscape of the poster.

The key visual elements in this poster appear in the middle of the poster. The scene presented is one of a woman, who appears as the largest image on the entire poster. Dressed for factory work, she wears a bold black apron, a light hat, and puts on a smock. The eye looks at this woman because of not only her size but also the boldness of the black apron that appears over the white and beige colors of the rest of the woman's outfit. She is the dominant image of the poster and she supports the fact that the poster persuades women in general. The adornment of the women in plain factory clothes also highlights that the poster targets women who are capable of taking up employment in the factories.

In order for the poster to fulfill its function, it must have a concise and easy to understand message. This poster not only tells women to learn how to make munitions but the texts reads that these women are doing their bit. At a glance the concise message of the poster is clear-it has only one goal that being to encourage women to enter the munitions factories. The poster has a narrow focus because it does not try to present a list of actions and behaviors women should engage in to support the war effort. By presenting a concise and simple message, the poster easily follows the aim of the first criteria for analyzing posters.

This poster does more than present a coherent message; it also has a focused audience. The poster highlights its viewers in the text when it says, "these women are

doing their bit." However, this poster does more than focus upon women as a whole. The poster presents an image of a woman putting on a coat and headed for factory work. In the background are other women who are also at work in the factories. The primary image of the poster emphasizes its focus upon women. The goal of the poster is not to encourage men to learn to make munitions, but rather women. In addition, the image of the woman appears to be member of the working class. This factor works to narrow the focal point of the poster. Thus, the poster fulfills the second goal of targeting a distinct segment of the population. In this case, working class women are being encouraged to enter into the workforce

This poster tries to appeal to a woman's sense of patriotism and guilt. The first, commonly used theme in any war poster is that of patriotism. The poster plays upon a woman's sense of patriotism when it stresses, "These women are doing their bit." It implies that these women are fulfilling their role in the war. By fulfilling this, role women garner a feeling that they are an important part of the war effort. The implication of this poster is that if you are not learning how to make munitions, then you are not doing your part in the war. However, the opposite holds true for women that follow the precepts of the poster. The poster also uses the notion of guilt in an indirect way. By implying that women not learning to make munitions are not supporting the war, the poster makes women feel guilty for not doing their part. If a woman is not fulfilling their role in the war, which in this case is learning how to make munitions, then clearly they should feel guilty for not supporting the war effort.

The soldier present in the poster is a secondary figure; the compelling image of the woman is an overshadowing presence. The emotional appeal in this poster clearly

supports the message that women have a new place in the social order. During times of war, it is socially acceptable and encouraged for women to leave domesticity to enter the workplace. The poster shows a woman present in the workplace, thus creating a new social sphere for these women. No longer are women going to be shunned in the workplace during the war effort, rather they are welcomed into this atmosphere. This part of the poster presents women as active components of the war work.

The textual and visual elements of this poster combine to create a poster geared towards a single purpose, to get women to go into the factories. This poster employs a number of strategies to present a scene that tells the story of women in the war. This story is one of women laboring in the factories to fulfill their functions as members of a nation of war. The focus upon women as a part of the larger war effort also hits upon the idea of women as active citizens in the British social framework. The idea of being a member of a nation and a citizen are two separate concepts. The role of the citizen is much broader and significant. Women who did seek work in the factories equated their labor as another reason why women should receive the full benefits of citizenship as British people.

Every Rivet Brings Us Nearer To Victory

The second poster in the set of analysis is simply entitled "Every Rivet Brings Us Nearer To Victory." The picture shows two women on a platform engaged in some sort of labor. Appearing below them are several men who are also engaged in work. The picture shows two women on a platform engaged in some sort of labor, while several men are engaged in work below them.



EVER
RIVE
BRING
US
NEAR
TO
VICTO

The power of the text is evident through the discussion of emotions; therefore, concerning the textual elements it is necessary to discuss the placement of words upon the page. The use of the word "rivet" highlights the importance of the factory and its role in the war. A rivet is an object associated with factory and munitions work; however, unlike objects such as bullets it is not commonly associated with war. The use of the word rivet is significant because a rivet is a smaller part of a machine that holds the entire mechanism together. Those in the factories, including women, function similarly to a rivet. They are a smaller, yet equally important aspect of the larger war effort. The loss of a rivet in an artillery object means that the larger item is doomed to collapse. The same holds true for the role of women, with their absence the war effort at home and abroad will collapse. The notion that without women at work the war effort is in peril also shows how this text implies a notion of guilt and responsibility. Women have a duty to perform in the factories; if they do not then they are not working to support those who are sacrificing their lives in the military. However, women by becoming factory workers alongside men illustrate their heightened role in the larger war effort.

The line of text occurs on the right hand side of the page. The text occurs so that one word occupies each line so that the text encompasses almost the entire left hand side of the page. This line of text is set off from the rest of the poster by a white box and the words appear in black, bold lettering. Because this poster was only available in black and white, it is impossible to tell if the color of the text was actually black or some darker color. The words are all in large, bold print. The placement of the text on this poster certainly forces a passerby to read what it says. However, because the text is so set off from the rest of the picture and occurs on the right hand side of the page the poster does

not draw the audience into the images present. Therefore, this poster is less effective and drawing the viewer into the images present on the page.

The textual factor of this poster is clearly the primary component, and the image present on the poster supports the text rather than the other way around. The visual images on the page are of people working in a factory. . This poster is unique because visually it includes both men and women, and the other places neither sex more prominently. This shows the effort of the recruiting committee to create a sense of unity and cooperation amongst the workers. It also works as a transitional measure because it shows men in the workplace, which conforms to the dominant ideology of men in the public sphere and it shows women in the workplace, which is more divergent. This shows that women have a specified role in the war effort. Therefore, the visual aspects of this poster are effective in showing how cooperation must occur amongst the working men and women in order to ensure the ultimate goal of victory. While the focus of the poster is broader than women, it still finds a way to incorporate them into the social fabric, highlighting the huge significance of women in the war effort.

The first point of analysis in this poster must be to determine if it presents a coherent and succinct message. The only text of the poster is merely the phrase that also functions as its title. The message of the poster is not clear by merely looking at the text on the poster. To understand the purpose of the poster it is necessary to look at the scene presented. Since the scene includes both men and women, the poster could be targeting both groups. However, for this discussion the appeal to women is significant.

The dual function of this poster means that its message and audience are more ambiguous. Unlike the first poster, this one is appealing to members of the working class

in general. While in years past the presence of women in munitions factories was certainly limited, this poster shows the proliferation of women in the factory because they are alongside the male workers. Therefore, this poster is still one designed to encourage women to join the labor force and illustrate that women have a role in the factories. The message of the poster, although somewhat ambiguous, encourages both men and women to join the labor force. The dual function of this poster also means that it serves two audiences, the male and the female. The focus of the poster upon two aspects of the war effort, men and women, could also serve a specific purpose to show how it is possible for men and women to work cooperatively alongside one another. The heightened presence of women in the factories certainly ruffled the feathers of traditional minded men who did not view women as capable enough to be working alongside them. By showing both genders, working together the poster shows how it is necessary for men and women to establish a harmonious working relationship with one another.

The emotional aspect of this poster is more evident in the text of the page as opposed to the factory scene. The use of words such as every, us, and victory also serve a purpose designed to draw in the audience member. The use of the word every established the notion that no matter how small a role the woman is playing in the war effort they are still producing something that will become a part of the larger war effort. This creates the notion that no matter how small the factory work it is still important. This coupled with the word "us" defines the women workers as members of the country who have a specific and important role in the war effort. While there are no images of soldiers present on the page, the use of the word us implies that it encompasses not only factory workers but also all members of the British nation. This highlights women as

important members of the nation, providing them with a stronger identity and role of citizenship.

The big word that makes this poster emotionally powerful is the patriotic and proud word victory. This word makes it appear as though victory is just out of reach, however, by producing one rivet it will be that much nearer. However, the use of the word victory also appeals to other emotional desires. While the exact date of the poster is unknown, it was printed sometime after 1915 when Britain was firmly entrenched in the war and a mass amount of human life was already lost. This and the sense of a close victory play upon the desire of women to establish peace. Therefore, women workers have a clear and direct role to play in ending the war. Any development that contributes to the end of what was already mounting to be Europe's bloodiest and most destructive role has a strong persuasive appeal.

On Her Their Lives Depend

The final poster I am analyzing is the well-known "On her their lives depend" poster. The poster presents a picture of a woman who is larger than any other part of the poster. The woman is dressed as though she is ready to go to work. The background scene shows a soldier in uniform on the battlefield. This male image appears much smaller compared to the woman. This shows the secondary importance of the man in these posters. The woman appears dressed in a white uniform type garb, most likely indicative of the attire of factory workers. The woman is clearly a worker because she has her hair neatly pulled back and is preparing to put a hat on. The attire of the woman appears as though it is a uniform, which supports the notion of women as being home front soldiers. The size and outline of the woman establish her as the most important

HER LIVES DEPEND



WOMEN
MUNITION
WORKERS

Enroll at once

element of the poster. This figure not only is the largest part of the poster, but she is set off from the background image but a bold black outline.

While the woman is the most important image of the poster, she is not the only figure present. In addition, the sheer presence of the man in the poster does lend credence to the notion that the soldier and women on the home front are connected. Appearing next to the soldier is cannon. This mass weapon of war is larger than the man, but still pales in comparison to the woman. This presence of an actual weapon of war on the battlefield highlights the fact that the labors of the women workers will have a direct and prominent role in the war.

The relationship of these three images to one another does provide an alternate social role for women in the war. However, it also draws upon the role of the woman as a nurturer and caregiver. The woman is producing weapons to protect the man, and the traditional role of a woman is that of a motherly figure. Therefore, this poster works to create a divergent social place for women in the public sphere, but the woman is still conforming to the traditional functions of women. This poster at the same time promotes a new role for women that conform to traditional stereotypes. This illustrates the transition state of women as the move from the home to the factory. The poster also inverts the stereotype of the woman depending upon the man by reversing this notion, because the soldier depends upon the female worker.

The first line of text presented is the statement "On her their lives depend." This does not present a specific demand for women rather it makes a statement. It establishes the interconnected relationship between the role of men and the role of women in the war. The poster's use of the pronoun "their" focuses upon the male soldiers as is evident by the

presence of a soldier in the background. Because the poster states that it is upon women that the lives of the soldiers depend, it is establishing the indisputable role of women in the war. They are just as important as men are because the lives of men are in their hands. This initial line of text appears across the top of the poster and is set apart from the visual components by its bold lettering that is shadowed by a maroon colored outline. This makes the text stand out from the visual representation in the photograph. Its presence at the top of the poster sets the tone and sentiment of the appeal and draws in the eyes of the reader with its bold statement.

The second line of text in this poster appears at the bottom left hand side of the poster. This presents a simple line of text reading, "women munitions workers." In the text the word munitions is sandwiched between the other two and appears larger than the other two words. This focus of the poster on the munitions establishes the role it is necessary for women to play in the war. The first line of text created the gendered appeal and this second set establishes which sector the women can play and effective role in. This phrase itself also works to create women as capable workers. In the eighty-year period prior to World War One, the phrase "women munitions workers" was certainly a contradictory notion. This line of text is set against a black strip that appears at the bottom of the poster and is set off from it in white type.

To the right of this line of text is the plan of action set out for women with the command for women to "enrol at once." These words create a sense of urgency and appear larger than the other line of text at the bottom of the poster. The use of the phrase "at once" creates the notion that women must spare no time in fulfilling the duties of the poster. This phrase coupled with the rest of the text on the page establishes the concept

that women who are working are providing for the safety of the soldiers. This simple command appears also against a black background and is set in white type. However, a red color outlines the text making it stand out from the rest of the poster. Not only does this bold red type outline it but also it is also underlined. The importance of this message cannot be underestimated because it is in such stark prominence.

The overall effect of the text on this page is effective because it draws the reader in with its bold initial statement appearing from left to right across the top. It also draws the viewer into the image occupying the greater part of the poster. Moving from top to down leads the eyes to the final text at the bottom of the page. The flow of the words on the poster is natural allowing the women to take in the full message. The poster presents the text in a manner that is easy to read and appeals to our tendency to read messages starting at the top and moving down while reading from left to right. This poster effectively presents the text in a manner that highlights the importance of the message, but it also does not draw away from the visual elements.

This poster serves two goals. It establishes the interconnected relationship of those in active combat and those who are toiling at the home front. This places the importance of the woman on a similar if not even playing field with her male soldier counterparts. It is through the construction of munitions by women on the home front that the lives of men in combat will be spared. Women are just as important in the war effort as men and this poster makes no doubt about that.

The second purpose of the purpose is that it also urges women to enroll in factory work. The poster explicitly says "Enrol at once." This is where the coherent and simple message of the poster lies. It is clear from the poster that it has a specific purpose and

function in mind. This function is explicit in the words of the poster that tell women they must enlist in factory work. Because this poster presents a clear demand and course of action for women, it does present a clear and coherent message. After viewing, this poster the sentiment follows that it is necessary to start work in the munitions factories.

Both the words of the poster and images demonstrate that the audience of this poster is indeed women. The poster persuades women to join the ranks of other munitions workers. While both a man and a woman appear in the poster, the woman is the one who must enroll immediately. The size and dominance of the woman appeals to fellow women, who like the figure in the poster, will also enlist in the factories. This poster does a more than adequate job of establishing its target audience.

This poster appeals to women's sense of patriotism. The poster shows that it is the patriotic duty of women to provide support and back up for her male counterparts on the battlefield. Thus, women just like men have an important patriotic duty to perform. As the poster implies, without women the lives of soldiers are in jeopardy. The poster implies that it is the woman's duty to engage in munitions work because in doing so she is fulfilling her duty of providing support for the men. The poster makes clear that if women are not making munitions than they are being careless in disregarding the lives of the soldiers. The poster through its use of the word depend clearly shows that it is the duty of the woman to perform the munitions work. If she does not than the army does not have the support needed; thus, implying that women not engaged in factory work should feel guilty.

These three posters do present a powerful appeal to women. While each of the posters has its own unique characteristics, these posters do share common factors. They

send the message that men are dependent upon women. They are working as home front soldiers to ensure the livelihood of their brothers, sons, and fathers who are off at work. The posters all three employ patriotism and duty to draw women into munitions work. By creating this sense of purpose, it works to establish the importance of women as members of the British nation. This notion of working to create an identity was certainly used after the war as justification for providing women with the full benefits of citizenship, namely that of suffrage.

Conclusion

Through a propaganda campaign centered on the use of posters, the government presented a persuasive call to arms for the working-class women of Britain. The exploration of the poster and its use during the war illustrates the specific strategies and themes put forth by the British. These themes include appealing to the patriotic duties of women, the capability and competency of women, and their ability to engage in heavy and demanding labor. These themes centered upon the role of women as industrial laborers, whose efforts could lead to winning the war.

The government's poster campaign for women created new work opportunities for these members of the British nation. During the war, working women enjoyed not only stable jobs but a heightened standard of living due to increased wages. They were now considered competent beings with the ability to engage in heavy and dangerous labor and perform just as well as men, if not better. Women proved themselves productive and competent industrial workers and this changed perceptions about them. These new perspectives were very different from the days of protective legislation for the "weaker sex."

The Great War did more than permit women to engage in productive labor, it provided them with the tools they needed to obtain citizenship. The accomplishments of women during the war convinced the government that women were worthy of citizenship. After the war, the British government had no reason not to grant these women the full benefits of citizenship. Angela Wollacott notes that the "vote was a token of gratitude for women's critical role in the war effort."²⁴ Without the propaganda

²⁴ Ibid., 189.

campaign encouraging women to work, suffrage may have remained elusive in the years after the war.

While suffrage was a positive benefit of the war, there were also negative repercussions. The greatest one was the demobilization of women after the war. With the war over women had to give up their positions in factories so that the veterans of war could seek employment. Unfortunately, women were unable to put up much of a fight:

On the whole, women workers acquiesced in this attempt to restore the prewar status quo. Most women accepted that they ought to vacate jobs that would be needed by returning servicemen, but they protested the dismissal where it was not clear that their job was one that a serviceman would want.²⁵

Women had to obey the patriotic call to return to the home in order to ensure that the victorious soldiers would have jobs when they returned home. While women did return to the home after the war, they returned with a new sense of empowerment.

²⁵ Ibid., 109.

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